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VA, UT Southwestern Sign Partnership for Gulf War Veterans

Top VA officials signed a partnership agreement with leaders of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas for research related to illnesses affecting some veterans of the Gulf War.



“VA’s partnering with this prestigious medical center is great news for veterans,” said Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health. “This clear commitment to research will help us explore new ways to provide the best possible care to our veterans.”



Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, who also attended the signing ceremony, sponsored legislation that directed VA to dedicate research funds in the amount of \$15 million annually over the next five years toward research on Gulf War-related illnesses.



“Sen. Hutchison’s continued commitment to the problems of Gulf War veterans – and her dedication to a wide range of other VA-related issues – have improved VA’s benefits and programs for all veterans,” Perlin said.

Ailments ranging from fatigue, weakness and respiratory problems to sleep disturbances, skin rashes and persistent headaches are among

those reported by veterans who took part in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm at rates significantly higher than those reported by veterans who did not serve in the combat zone.

Memorial Day

May 29, 2006



Venture is published
by VANTHCS

Editors
Susan Poff
Penny Kerby

Photos courtesy of
Sharon Balthrop
Martha Fellhauer-Sampson
Nancy Gray
Bruce Morris



From the Director ...

I'd like to give everyone a big 'pat on the back' for your efforts during some recent review visits we've had at VANTHCS. Visitors went to each of our facilities, and I heard the same compliment from all of them. They were so impressed with how welcoming and helpful everyone was - from giving people directions to just a friendly hello. That is something that makes me very proud. I'm also receiving lots of accolades about employees from our patients and their families. You're doing a great job!



Betty Bolin Brown



Bonham VA Recognizes Students

A plant often begins from a single seed, but a group of very special gardeners in Bonham may have planted the seed for a new program that can help people for years to come. A seed often needs just the right combination of soil, water and sunlight to flourish. This new program sprang forth because of the combined efforts of the Bonham ISD, Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center and a group of dedicated instructors that didn't back away from hard work and a challenge.

This sharing agreement is a learning opportunity for the students while providing a valuable service for veterans residing at the VA Medical Center. On April 26, Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center recognized the many accomplishments of Fannin County special needs students who volunteer at the facility. Bonham VA participates with the Fannin County shared service agreement for special needs students of Fannin County. Eight students provide services in the greenhouse, growing plants for patient care areas as well as the patient garden.



Charles Hendon, Authur Bright, Rex Chesser, Melvin Patterson (back row, l-r) and Joshua Nix, Alicia Brewer, Larissa Williams, and Nikolas Martinez (front row, l-r) proved the merits of this innovative program that began in the Fall of 2005. Teachers and aids directing the class were Cortney Dowd, Gail Orndorff, Bonnie Ann Simpson, Tammy Wheless, along with Vocational Adjustment Coordinator Michael Uhl.



Bonham VA honored the commitment of the students and teachers recently during a special ceremony where Operations Manager Dan Heers welcomed the crowd of students, teachers, family and friends. Presentations followed and then everyone visited the greenhouse and garden where life skills were taught in a format the students found fascinating and enjoyable. The best part came when everyone enjoyed a lunch that featured fresh onions grown by the class.

Deloris Clemons, SRMVC Public Affairs Officer
and Allen Rich, *North Texas e-News*



Public Affairs is always interested to hear a story idea or learn about something going on in your Service - just send it to Penny Kerby via Outlook.

Happy 60th Anniversary VA Voluntary Service

For as long as the United States has had veterans, the nation has also had men and women who volunteered to help in the care of the wounded, the sick and the injured. VA North Texas Health Care System honored its volunteers recently for facilities in Dallas, Fort Worth and Bonham.



County Music Entertainer Janie Fricke and her band played two performances for VA volunteers at VFW Post 4852 in Bonham and Cedar Canyon Dude Ranch in Lancaster. The western theme brought everyone onto the dance floor when Fricke sang her old favorites as well as some new releases.

The highlight of the jamboree was announcing the volunteers of the year. Joyce Hamby of Ravenna received the honors for Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center in Bonham. Pictured left with Steve Stous and Ms. Brown, Hamby has volunteered for 6 years and has over 1,300 hours of service. She can be found

running errands and assisting patients in the Nursing Home Care Unit. She has even hosted cookouts and dinners at her home and church for VA patients. She is charming and compassionate, and the patients absolutely adore her.



Dallas VA Medical Center named Ashley Blackman of Fort Worth as its volunteer of the year (pictured left with Jeff Milligan, Robert Martin, Steve Stous and Eric Jacobsen). Better known as Blackie, he serves as transportation coordinator for the Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic. Blackie spends countless hours coordinating drivers, including his wife Kay and himself, in picking up patients for their appointments and then making sure they arrive home safely. Blackie is credited in negotiating with the Ross Perot Corporation for the donation of a \$35,000 van to assist with transportation. Blackie also received the 2,500 hour volunteer award.

Volunteering is up from last year. Over 1,600 volunteers logged 142,374 hours. That combined with monetary donations puts a total value of VANTHCS volunteer services at \$3,550,746.

VA 75th Anniversary lapel pins are still available in Public Affairs



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Commemorating 75 years of service



The Prisoners of War program held April 12 featured Col. Kenneth W. Cordier (US Air Force-Retired) as keynote speaker. Col. Cordier was an F4C pilot when he was shot down over North Vietnam December 2, 1966.

Col. Cordier shared the harsh times as a POW and recalled the only time he cried in captivity when he heard American airplanes coming for what would be his eventual release March 4, 1973. He spent 6 years, 3 months, 1 day as a POW.

During his military career, Col. Cordier was awarded Two Silver Stars, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, Purple Heart and POW Medal.

Joining Col. Cordier was Medal of Honor Recipient Col. James Stone - held as a POW during the Korean War.



Remember America's fallen heroes this Memorial Day. Services will be held throughout the community, including D/FW National Cemetery. Read more about the history of Memorial Day,
<http://www1.va.gov/opa/speceven/memday/index.asp>

"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO SHALL HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND HIS ORPHAN"
~ ABRAHAM LINCOLN ~

Dallas VA Medical Center
4500 S. Lancaster Rd.
Dallas, TX 75216
214 742-8387

Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center
1201 E. Ninth St.
Bonham, TX 75418
903 583-2111

Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic
300 W. Rosedale
Fort Worth, TX 76104
817 335-2202

www.north-texas.med.va.gov